

# WOODWARD AVENUE CORRIDOR PLAN

JN218754EPE

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

DRAFT – Sept. 20, 2024

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for planning, facilitating, and monitoring engagement for the Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT) Woodward Corridor Plan. This public engagement plan (PEP) has strategies to help build trust and support amongst the communities and the various stakeholders for the project. This engagement plan is based on the project team's experience working with MDOT and local municipalities and other agencies on previous projects along the M-1 (Woodward Avenue) corridor.

Engagement is a key component for the project's success. A variety of communication techniques will give ample opportunities for community leaders, agencies, and the public to be engaged. Information and materials can be viewed online, and virtual and live events will occur to allow more in-depth feedback. The PEP describes how engagement will be a layered approach throughout this process and outlines the types of groups, meetings, events, and promotion of the project that will be involved. This is meant to be a flexible document and can be updated at key milestones to track engagement activities.

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

MDOT is creating a corridor plan for Woodward Avenue from downtown Detroit to Pontiac to establish a comprehensive vision for the corridor that balances the needs of users and provide a strategic approach for future MDOT investments along the corridor. This plan will analyze and address multimodal, operational, traffic, and safety concerns for road users along and across the corridor in addition to assessing pavement condition needs and the potential for future projects.

This will require MDOT, agencies, and municipalities to work together toward a unified approach and design for the Woodward corridor. Fortunately, there have been several

prior corridor-wide plans where consensus was achieved among the players. While MDOT was involved in some of those plans, the department did not lead the process and some important engineering and safety aspects were not fully addressed. There have been many changes along the corridor since the previous plans were prepared: private investments, changes in travel patterns, more accessible multimodal data, the QLINE, and more. Though staff and officials have changed, there remains a shared interest in crafting a new plan that can be used for future MDOT investments and decisions by the municipalities along the corridor.

This project will include a prioritized vision based on current funding and suggest other ways for the municipalities, agencies, and the private sector to help fund improvements along this iconic corridor.

### CORRIDOR PLAN GOALS

The intent is to produce a Corridor Plan outlining future transportation improvements on the Woodward Avenue corridor that:

- 1) Considers environmental, community, historic preservation, and economic goals throughout the transportation planning process.
- 2) Evaluates the infrastructure, geometric/safety, and operational needs of all modes of transportation.
- 3) Coordinates with and integrates applicable recommendations of concurrent public transit studies which may include bus rapid transit (BRT), fixed-route and other related transit services.
- 4) Integrates sustainability and climate resilience best practices.

- 5) Establishes high-level construction cost estimates for the preferred options, prioritization of project segments, and estimated timelines based on current funding.

## ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

One of the keys to this project’s success is to ensure that there are opportunities not only to obtain information but also to have ongoing opportunities for meaningful two-way communication and balance the needs of those involved and provide input that helps shape the outcomes of the project.

This is a collaborative process between MDOT and the consultant team. MDOT staff will be involved to help identify key committee members, stakeholders, distribute materials, and help keep city and township officials informed. Through the project and engagement approach, the consultant team and MDOT will stay visible throughout the process and develop a working relationship and rapport with community leaders and staff, agencies, and residents along the Woodward Avenue corridor. Figure 1 presents the initial seven segments for the corridor, based on how they currently function.

## GOALS FOR ENGAGEMENT

The following lists out the key communication and engagement goals that are part of this process:

- Be an effective community partner and engage a broad cross-section of stakeholders to provide timely, accurate, interesting, relevant, and project information.
- Build trust with stakeholders and residents with transparency and respect by understanding key issues and concerns.
- Collaborate closely with the Mayor’s Coordination Committee and the Local Advisory Committee to gain critical technical feedback and communicate information clearly among the municipalities.
- Revise the engagement strategy as needed to ensure we are engaging targeted audiences in a meaningful way and gathering feedback.
- Create and share project resources that keep audiences engaged during the process.
- Effectively communicate findings and alternatives to the public and the media.

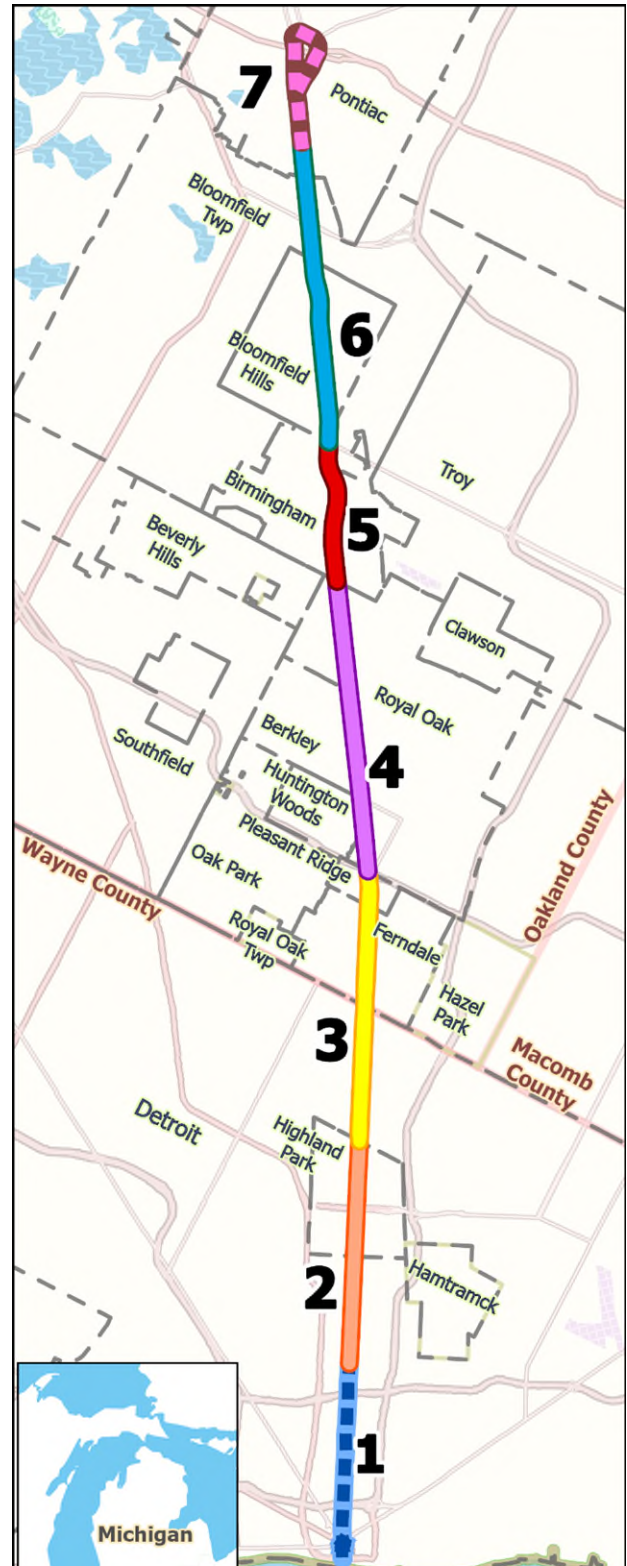


Figure 1: Woodward Avenue Corridor Segments

## 1.2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### PROJECT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

While the engagement process will be led by the consultant team, MDOT staff will have continuous involvement for the duration of the project. MDOT staff will identify committee members and key stakeholders, distribute materials, and help with promotion of the project and events, assist with logistics planning, and ensure the participation of appropriate MDOT staff in meetings throughout the project process.

The consultant team will work with MDOT on outreach support and assist with graphics to help communicate information, news releases, presentations, and social media posts. These include:

#### PROJECT WEBSITE

MDOT will host the project on their established website; the consultant team will provide information and documents that will be posted here. This includes links to surveys and other methods for feedback.

#### INVITATIONS TO EVENTS

The consultant team will assist and/or prepare flyers that can be used to invite community leaders, stakeholders, and residents to events and meetings. These promotional materials can also be used for communities to forward to their residents.

#### GRAPHIC MESSAGING AND PROJECT BRANDING

For consistency, this project will have the same style, font, and colors used throughout the process on the website, presentations, press releases, and other materials.

#### MEDIA AND NEWS RELEASES

The consultant team will prepare draft news releases related to the project for MDOT's communication team to distribute. MDOT messaging for this effort will describe this project, the need for it, and how it is different from previous projects and studies along the corridor, and how the study will be used. Messaging will include previous studies by the cities and agencies that will form the foundation for this work.

#### OPEN HOUSES

The consultant team will help MDOT facilitate a series of three open houses with exhibits. The first open house will provide an overview of the Woodward Avenue corridor and provide opportunities for feedback on goals for the corridor and the evaluation criteria. The second open house will focus on showing the preliminary alternatives and gaining insight from the public on their preferences. The third and final open house will feature the corridor recommendations. During all of the open houses, the public will have opportunities to ask questions and record comments or questions. Surveys will also be used to help organize public input.

#### PRESENTATIONS

The consultant team will prepare presentations related to the project that can be used at group meetings, open houses, public meetings, and group settings. Presentations may also be recorded for viewing on the website and will follow MDOT and Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines.

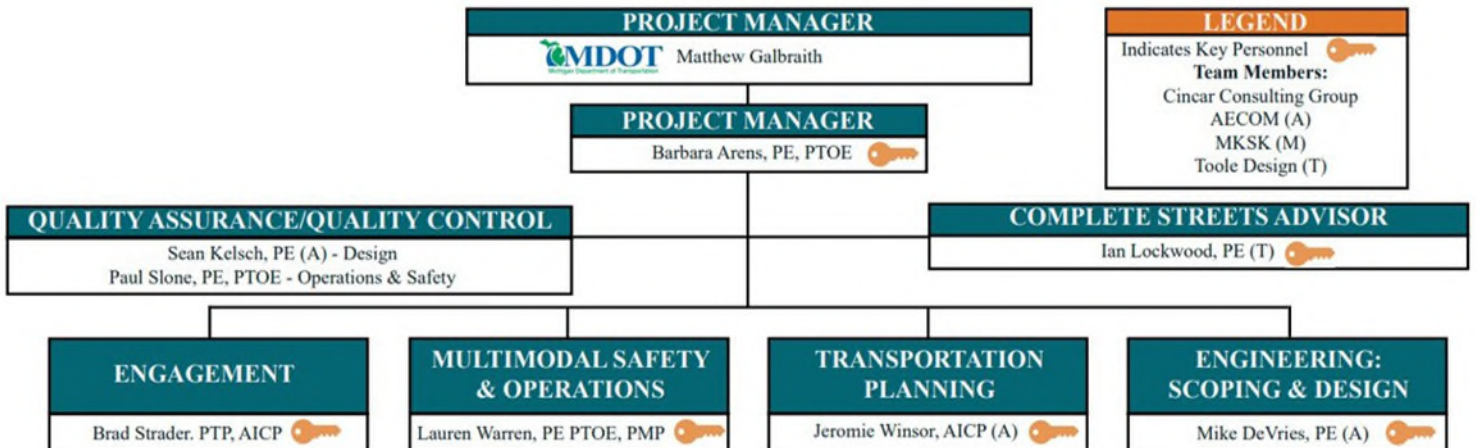
#### SOCIAL MEDIA

The consultant team will help prepare language and graphics that follow MDOT and ADA guidelines for MDOT social media posts to provide updates and news about events.

### 1.3. PROJECT TEAM

**PROJECT WEBSITE**

[www.Michigan.gov/MDOT/Projects-Studies/Studies/Additional-Studies/M-1-Corridor-Plan](http://www.Michigan.gov/MDOT/Projects-Studies/Studies/Additional-Studies/M-1-Corridor-Plan)



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# ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

## 2.1 GROUPS TO ENGAGE

### THE MDOT WORKING GROUP

MDOT and the project consultant team will serve as the working group that will ensure that different groups (i.e., Transportation Service Centers, or TSCs) at MDOT are on the same page internally. This group will be split into two different sub working groups. The Local Advisory Committee (LAC) will discuss data, alternatives, design, etc. The Engagement Working Group (EWG) will give input on engagement activities and help with meeting logistics and distribution of materials. Both groups will provide the first level of review for all work.

**Figure 2** presents a graphic of the stakeholder engagement groups.

### MAYOR'S COORDINATION COMMITTEE (MCC)

The Mayor's Coordination Committee (MCC), or the Government Advisory Committee (i.e., the current committee for Woodward Avenue that is hosted by the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments, or SEMCOG) includes the mayors, township supervisors, city managers or other executives of the communities and organizations (counties, Michigan House and Senate, SEMCOG, transit agencies). This group was involved in many projects to promote Woodward Avenue as a single corridor and helped with the previous Woodward Avenue Complete Streets Plan. This committee will meet quarterly (six times, in-person assumed) and follow their current protocol for meeting format. The MCC will offer suggestions for who should be part of the LAC. This group will also serve as the liaison between the MDOT working group and local communications staff. This group will be informed by the project team in advance of upcoming events so they can assist with public outreach by sharing engagement materials and events widely through their community and network.

### LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LAC)

A LAC will meet six times (half in person and half virtual assumed) during the project. This group will advise the MCC throughout the process. This informal group may include MDOT, representatives of each of the communities and two counties, transit providers, nonmotorized advocates, SEMCOG, and perhaps other organizations. This is both a technical and advisory committee with one to two representatives of the communities and organizations, such as the community planners or engineers. This group will serve as a resource to the team, outlining local plans and expectations, helping identify key issues and segments, responding to alternatives, and helping organize focus groups.

### FOCUS GROUPS

There will be three in-person meetings that will include transit-focused discussions with the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), Oakland County, People Mover, QLINE, etc. Transit focus groups will discuss certain topics or segments in more detail. Two meetings would be with transit agencies, and one meeting would be determined based on other engagement activities.

### KEY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

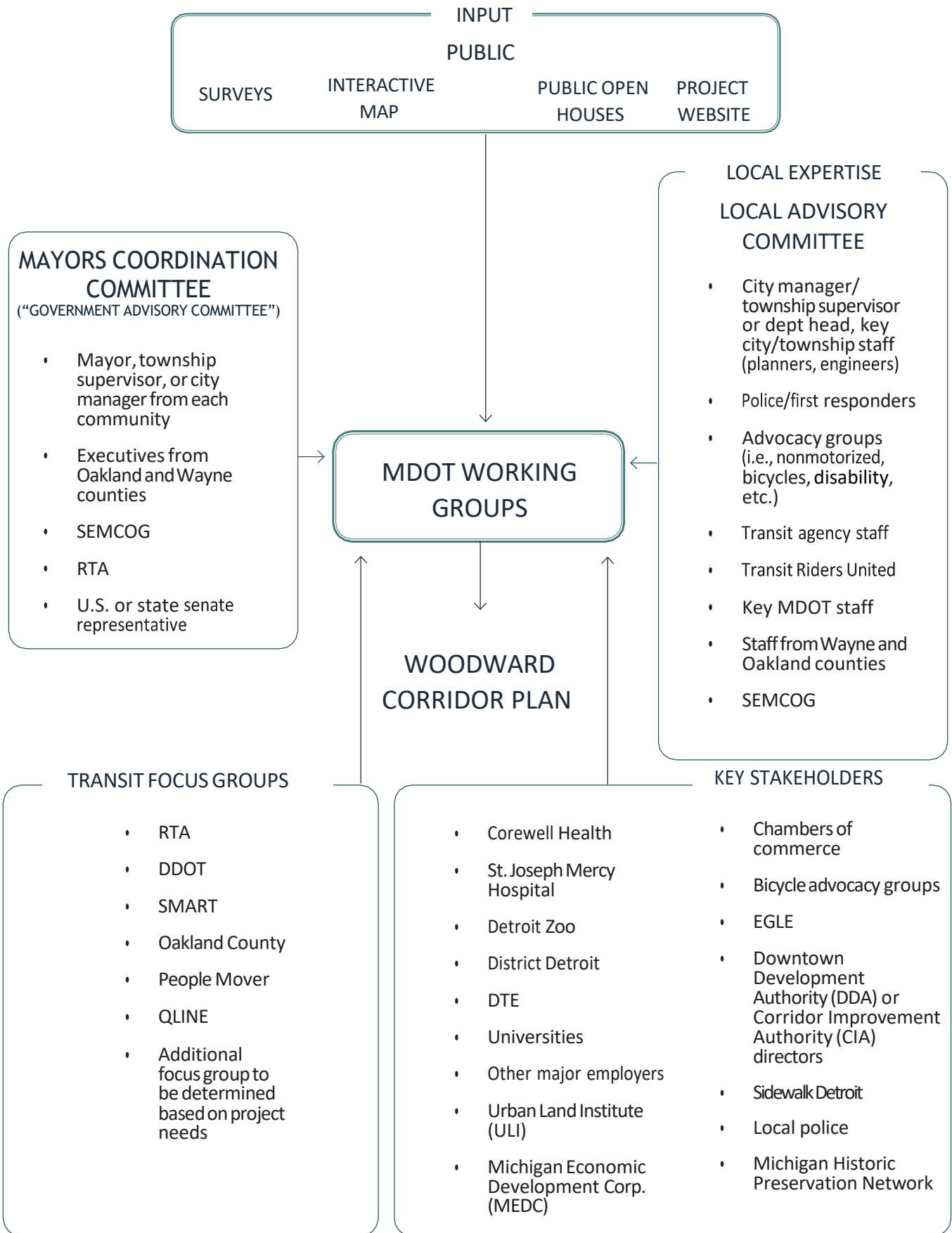
Up to five stakeholder meetings can be held with chambers of commerce, bicycle advocacy groups, disability advocacy groups, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), large employers (Corewell Health, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, the Detroit Zoo, District Detroit, police groups, Michigan Historic Preservation Network, etc.), small business roundtables, and others to address their concerns and provide feedback on alternatives related to their areas of interest. These events are anticipated to be an in-person presentation or facilitating a discussion at an organization's regular event, but they could also include a display at a community event.

## GENERAL PUBLIC

Through three live open houses and online opportunities (during different points of the process), we will engage the public. The MDOT project website and ArcGIS StoryMaps will provide important updates and feedback methods, including a survey and interactive map. The open houses will be in-person live, but the same information will be repeated afterward virtually. A summary of information and feedback will be completed after each open house. The three open houses will focus on:

- 1) **Provide Corridor Overview and Goals with Evaluation Criteria:** Familiarize everyone with previous plans and explain the process to lead toward the anticipated results of a prioritized plan. Leveraging previous work to develop future project momentum, we will develop goals and challenges alongside stakeholders to build support for the corridor priorities. A right of way building exercise will be conducted to help understand what the corridor has space to contain and review visions for the space, which will assist in developing potential corridor alternatives.
- 2) **Illustrative Alternatives:** Present illustrative alternatives based on evaluation criteria, potential impacts, options for timing, and comments. Present potential practical alternatives.
- 3) **Corridor Recommendations:** Recommendation(s) for the Woodward Avenue corridor, the implementation process, funding partnerships, and identifying next steps.





**Figure 2: Stakeholder Engagement Plan Groups**

## 2.2 ENGAGEMENT MATERIALS, PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

### ENGAGEMENT MATERIALS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Engagement materials will be produced by the consultant team throughout the duration of the project. After each round of engagement with the communities, we will summarize the input to provide a framework that will help create proposed alternatives.

ADA compliance regulations are important and will be met in a way that allows community members to engage and take part in meetings and other forms of input. ADA compliance will be completed for external, public-facing project materials as authorized by Section 508 of the Americans Disabilities Act and web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.0). For community workshops, accommodations can be made for persons with disabilities and limited English-speaking ability. Large print materials, auxiliary aids, or the service of interpreters, signers, or readers are available upon request to MDOT.

Translated materials will be developed using MDOT's contract with Bromberg and Associates for notifying non-English-speaking populations, to be identified using community data, of involvement opportunities. Interpretation services, including American Sign Language (ASL) translators, will be provided by MDOT at public meetings and outreach events. ADA-compliant materials will also be provided by MDOT for individuals with disabilities.

### EQUITABLE PLANNING PROCESS

This plan aims to ensure that there is an equitable planning process representative of the communities in the region. The following communities are critical audiences for MDOT to connect with as part of this study to reach a diverse cross section and meet federal Title VI and Environmental Justice populations:

- Title VI and environmental justice populations (i.e., low income, minority)
- Additional underserved and underrepresented communities, including:
  - Younger residents
  - Older residents
  - Members of the disability community
  - Households without vehicles



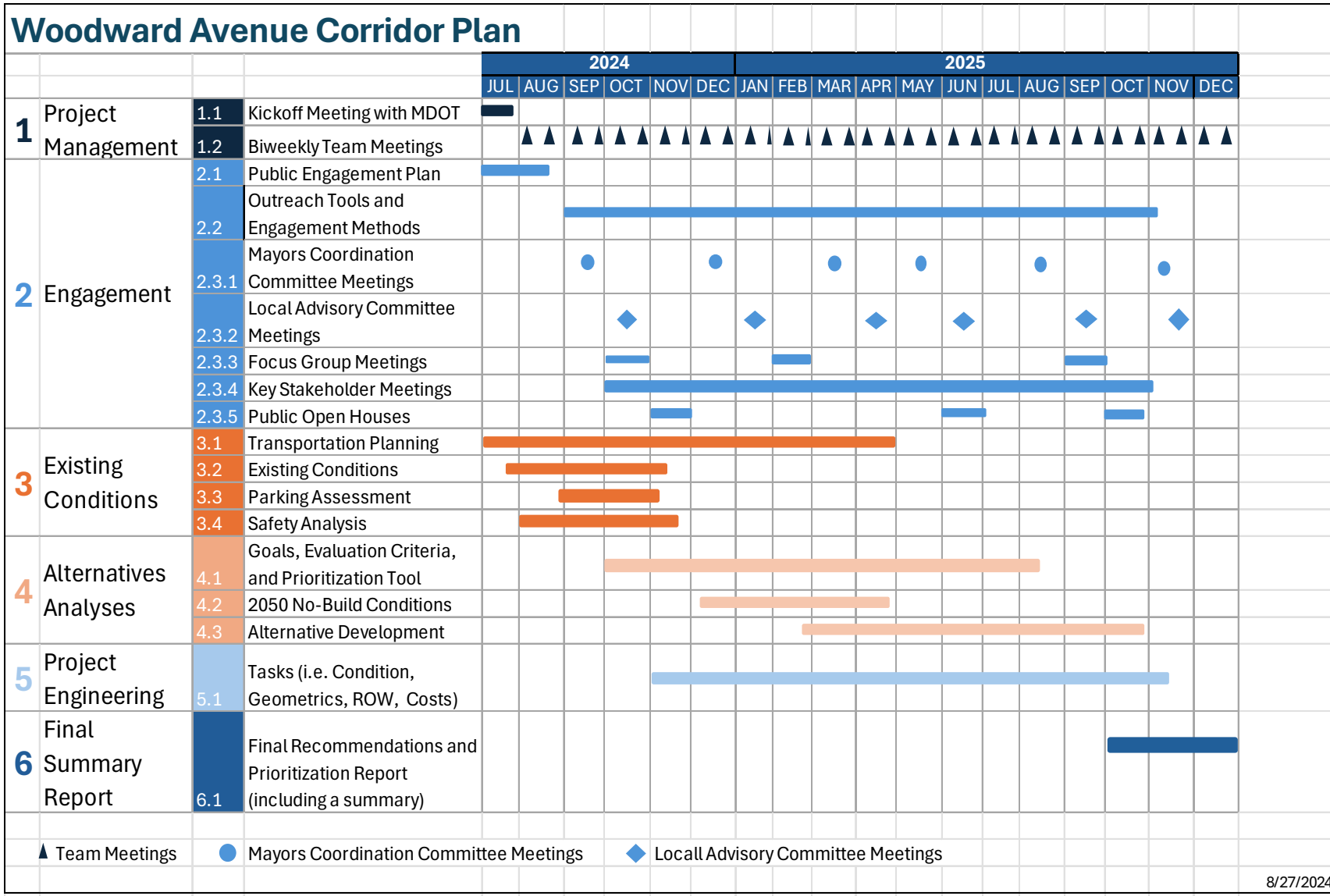
## PROJECT OUTREACH METHODOLOGY

Various mechanisms will be used to promote awareness of the project to communities and agencies. These methods will detail how information can be obtained on the project and describe ways to provide feedback. In general, promotion of public meetings will follow these guidelines:

- Notices will be made approximately 14 days prior to the scheduled event. Notices include:
  - Two weeks prior: General meeting announcement (flyer/postcard shared, community facilities - i.e., government buildings, libraries, etc.), yard signs posted in parks and along major walking routes in the community (will check ahead of time with the communities to comply with their sign ordinances).
  - Two weeks prior: MDOT news release distributed, shared on social media and emailed to relevant email contact lists
  - Two days prior: Social/email/press release reminders
  - Targeted invitations from MDOT, as well as from cities and townships along the Woodward Avenue corridor: Custom emails to relevant user groups
- MDOT will use its public website, GovDelivery e-mailing lists, Facebook, X and Threads accounts for notifications.
- The cities and townships along the corridor will also need to be involved in getting the word out to each community, specifically the MCC. Each community should commit to at least doing the following to promote the project and engagement:
  - Share the initial MDOT news release for the project. This news release will include an overview of the project, goals for the project, where to find more information, and how people can stay engaged throughout the process. This news release or revised language can be created to be shared on community newsletters, social media channels, and email distribution lists.
    - For each open house event, there will be flyers and news releases created by MDOT and the project team that can be shared through each community's social media, newsletters, and email distribution lists. It is suggested that these are shared with the community communications groups once MDOT approves to help announce the project, promote engagement, and get the word out.
    - MDOT will work with the communities to understand their event and meeting calendars, what types of outreach techniques are typically used, when monthly newsletters may be issued, etc.
- Special attention will be made to identify and involve underserved populations and low-income populations by holding meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times, making materials available in alternative formats.
- Accommodations can be made for persons with disabilities and limited English-speaking ability. Large print materials, auxiliary aids, or the service of interpreters, signers, or readers are available upon request to MDOT.
- There will be a variety of ways for the public to review materials and provide comments, including the project website, online surveys, at public meetings, and through an interactive mapping tool.

# PROJECT SCHEDULE

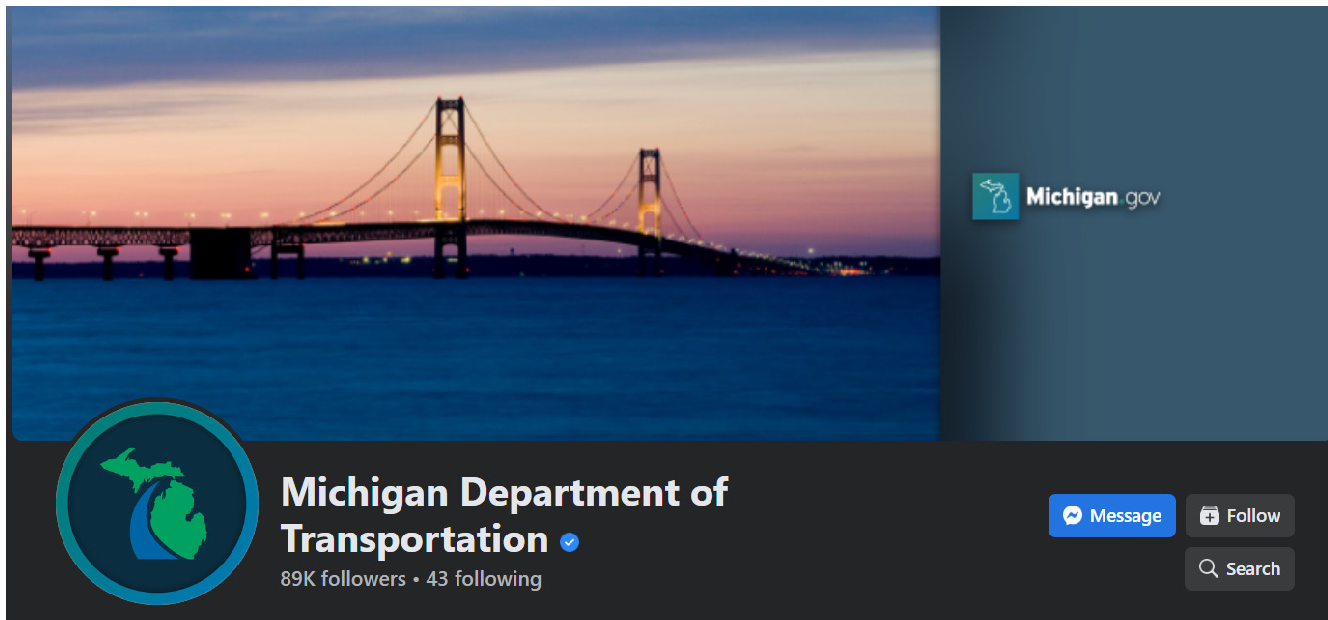
## 2.3 PROJECT SCHEDULE



8/27/2024

- MDOT working group meetings occur on a biweekly basis throughout the duration of the project.
- The MCC and LAC meet quarterly throughout the duration of the project.
- Key stakeholder meetings will be held when needed.

## 2.4 METHODS FOR OUTREACH



### PROJECT WEBSITE

Interactive online activities will be coordinated with in-person events so individuals who were unable to attend are invited to contribute online.

*Project Webpage and ArcGIS StoryMaps:* The project webpage will be hosted by MDOT and include content drafted by the project consultant team and reviewed by the MDOT working group. StoryMaps will also be created by the consultant team to help provide 24/7 on-going project updates, host presentation materials, provide opportunities for community input, and serve as an avenue to crowd-source information. The content will be reviewed and approved by MDOT Communications. Graphics and PDF files will be ADA-compliant.

*Interactive Activities:* These interactive activities include web-based surveys, interactive crowd-source mapping, and public comment forms for open-ended feedback. Specifically, we will use the Survey123 tool to get feedback regarding project issues and concerns and input on design alternatives. The survey will capture feedback from a broader audience beyond those who attend the open houses.

A survey will be conducted of community officials (city councils or commissions, township boards, planning commissions, downtown development authorities (DDAs) and others that include Woodward Avenue to gather key issues that can be addressed as part of the study.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a critical tool in reaching the public and advertising events and engagement opportunities as part of the planning process.

*Content Support:* The planning consultant team may provide graphics and other content for social media posts.

*Posting and Updating:* MDOT will be responsible for direct posting of information, monitoring user interactions, and creating event pages for public meetings/events.

*Preferred Platforms:* Facebook, X and Threads

*Community e-flyer* will be provided as web-friendly content for community websites.

